

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The objections to claims 15-19 have been obviated by the above amendments.

The claims are patentable over Bareket, US 6,614,520. Bareket describes a process for detecting defects in a reticle by directly scanning the surface of a reticle to produce a baseline image and periodically comparing that baseline image to current images of the reticle obtained in the same fashion. See, Bareket at col. 3, ll. 17-37. importantly, the baseline and current images are produced by directly scanning the subject reticle.

In contrast, the present claims recite methods and systems in which data indicative of a current pattern produced on an article is compared with data indicative of a reference pattern produced on a reference article. That is the condition of the reticle is determined not from measurements of the reticle itself (as in Bareket), but from measurements of patterns produced on articles using the subject reticle. Hence, the present claims are patentable over Bareket.

Kaklin, US Pub. No. 2002/1064064, is cited for describing a multi-layer stack structure, charged particle beam and controlling the condition of a reticle after etching processes. Even if true, however, incorporating such teachings with those of Bareket would not yield the present invention for at least the reasons discussed above. Hence, the claims are patentable over this combination of references.

If there are any additional fees due in connection with this communication, please charge Deposit Account No. 19-3140.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: August 7, 2006

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